

BLUES CRASH TO FIRST DEFEAT

By STUART EARP Wycombe Wanderers 0, Hayes 1

WYCOMBE Wanderers tasted defeat in the second Rothmans Isthmian League match of the season on Tuesday night when a 74th minute goal by Peter Lavers gave Hayes a 1-0 victory. And Wanderers have only themselves to blame.

Territorially, the Blues dominated this match but their inability to create enough clear cut scoring chances eventually cost them three points. For almost the entire match, Wycombe's approach work was superior to their opponents' but their attacks died whenever they reached the penalty area.

With such a percentage of the play, there were inevitably a number of half chances to score and yet these were either wasted or saved by goalkeeper Alan Cox, who had a fine game.

Overall, a draw would have been a more fair result on the night but football has a way of levelling itself up over the season. On Saturday Wanderers were rather fortunate to record a

4-2 win over Tooting . . . on Tuesday the luck went the other way.

Wycombe could certainly not be criticised for any lack of effort against Hayes but what was particularly distressing was the amount of good work they wasted. With Hayes operating a fluid 4-2-4 situation, the Blues held the upper hand in midfield and the build-ups looked promising. But a lack of willingness to shoot robbed them of any chance of goals. On several occasions one of the front men dallied too long instead of getting in strikes.

GOAL BONUS

In fairness, Hayes pulled back everyone for set pieces and packed their penalty area. They seemed more intent in taking a

point and Lavers' goal must have come as a bonus. Still, the Middlesex men did their job well enough and none more so than last year's Wycombe skipper John Delaney.

The tall centre half has always had the ability to rise to the big occasion and he scarcely put a foot wrong on Tuesday. He was well supported at centre back by another ex-Wanderer, Paul Griffiths who has greatly improved since his spell with the Blues. The third former Wycombe man in the Hayes side, Geoff Anthony, did not enjoy one of his better games.

Manager Ted Powell made one enforced change, bringing in Peter Spittle for John Maskell in goal. 'Mask' is likely to be out for a fortnight with his ankle injury. Dave Bullock replaced John Priestley on the sub's bench. Powell was obviously loathe to change his winning line up from Saturday but he could not have been happy with the team's performance and a change seems likely up front.

Chances were few and far between throughout this game and apart from some nice touches by Alan Davies in midfield, Wycombe struggled to break down the visitors' defence. Ian Pearson, hat-trick hero from Saturday, got in one strike after rushing onto Mick Holfield's through ball but Cox dived well to save.

At the other end Spittle found himself, under pressure when collecting high crosses but his handling was excellent and his goal kicking much improved.

Right up to half time, Wanderers looked the more skilful side as their midfield trio prompted raid after raid. But the front three received little change from Delaney and Co. and only one further drive from Pearson, which flew just wide in the 39th minute, offered any hope of a breakthrough.

Dylan Evans gave signs of better things to come when he sent a 25 yard drive flashing past the post from the restart with Cox struggling. Once again, however, there was nothing clear cut created by Wycombe for long periods.

Two efforts in quick succession promised much when Pearson ran through the defence and curled a shot just wide and then Evans saw a snap shot well taken by Cox. But it was Hayes who made the decisive move in the 74th minute. Keith Morris had possession on the bye-line just outside the penalty area. Mick Sorenson seemed to have him covered but the winger turned well and sent over a cross. Lavers, still a consistent marksman was unforgivably left unmarked to head home a simple goal with Spittle stranded on the line.

Wanderers, without ever dominating, kept plugging away for a reply but their attacks tended to be stop-start affairs. A classic example came when George Cleary had the ball on the edge of the box but waited too long and failed to spot Holfield in a great scoring position on his left.

It was Holfield, in fact, who saw the best chance of an equaliser brilliantly saved by Cox. Pearson fed Evans who intelligently laid the ball back across goal to Holfield. Mick caught his shot perfectly but saw the goalkeeper leap high to push the ball over the top for a corner, one of eight won by Wanderers, compared with Hayes' two.

Final chance of the night fell to Cleary who ran onto Pearson's fine through ball. The bearded striker had barely a second for a clear shooting chance at goal but again, he spurned the opportunity by waiting too long.

WYCOMBE: P. Spittle, M. Sorenson, K. Mead, A. Phillips, P. Birdseye, A. Davies, H. Kennedy, M. Holfield, G. Cleary, I. Pearson, D. Evans. Sub D. Bullock (not used).

HAYES: A. Cox, A. Carrington, P. Griffiths, J. Delaney, K. Kent (sub G. Lewis 66 mins), R. Wiles, R. Butler, G. Anthony, C. Regis, P. Lavers, K. Morris.

Referee: C. Gregory.

Half-time: 0-0. **Goalscorer,** Hayes — Lavers (74).

Attendance: 1,450.

24th Dec 1973